

A P A R E N T ' S
T O
G U I D E

iOS

axis

“

Every day, every hour, the parents are either passively or actively forming those habits in their children upon which, more than upon anything else, future character and conduct depend.

—Charlotte Mason

iAmOverwhelmed

21st-century parents have to figure out all kinds of digital technology, even if we're not particularly "techie" by nature. It's similar to when we worry about helping a high-schooler with algebra when we ourselves are lousy at math. We can send them to tutors when they grow beyond our experience in math, but digital tech doesn't allow us that same luxury of delegation. It's vitally important that we know (and keep learning) what our teens' devices do, how they work, and how they're being used.

Despite what it may seem like, not everything or everyone on the Internet is out to get our kids, and a few simple strategies implemented via the device's operating system can quickly and regularly protect them from violent content, identity thieves, cyberbullies, porn, and sexual predation. Use these efforts in tandem with relational techniques **aimed at connection instead of control**, and the device becomes a way to strengthen the parent-child bond while still allowing us to prioritize their health and safety.

What does "OS" mean?

It stands for "operating system." Essentially, today's smartphones and tablets are handheld computers. The minute we turn on a smartphone, computer, tablet, video game console, or even a graphing calculator, an OS fires up. The OS runs the device, allows the integration of features and apps, provides the user interface, and keeps the device running smoothly. A mobile OS also connects a smartphone, tablet, or wristwear device to its wireless carrier (Verizon, AT&T, etc.) and to Wi-Fi networks. [Current smartphone operating systems](#) include Google's Android, Apple's iOS, Microsoft's Windows Mobile, Nokia's Symbian OS, and Blackberry's RIM.

Not sure which OS is running on a device? The name and version of the device's operating system is available under **Settings > General > About** (see photo).



What should I know about iOS?

While Android OS is by far the most-used mobile operating system on earth, controlling [more than 80% of the mobile OS market](#), Apple's OS (known as iOS) makes up virtually the rest of the market share (and iPhones are by far the most-desired phone amongst today's teens in the US). iOS works on about 60 devices and offers [unchallenged compatibility between them](#) (Apple designed all their devices that way intentionally to make iOS users more inclined to only purchase their devices).

All Apple devices come standard with iOS, which has [extended parental controls](#), including the ability to hide certain apps, schedule when the device can be used, regulate who can call or text to and from the device, and notify a parent when the user arrives or leaves a certain location (see below). Also, the iOS [Family Sharing](#) feature allows one adult in the household to oversee shared features on the devices, and up to six family members can share purchases on iTunes, iBooks, and the App Store, as well as a calendar, photo album, and reminders. (It also allows you to find a missing device.)

Where do I find parental controls on an iOS device?

There's been a lot of hype around Apple's new iOS 12 update because of its enhanced parental controls. It has some cool features, but we definitely wish it were more user-friendly. And like all parental controls, it is not a one-stop solution, nor can it match the effectiveness of having strong relationships with your kids.

Parental controls used to be more limited and were under “**Restrictions**” in your Settings. Now [those features have been incorporated](#) into Apple's new “**Screen Time**” feature. Screen Time includes information about the apps used, number of notifications received, number of times the phone was picked up, and other features. It will also allow you to control amount of time you or your kids spend on the phone, the content consumed on the phone, safety settings, and bedtime limits. So first, install that update you've been putting off! ([Here are Apple's instructions](#) for how to do so.)

How do I set up Screen Time?

Note: In order to take full advantage of the features of Screen Time, you must also have an iOS device (could be an iPad). You can set up Screen Time on each individual device, then password protect them so your kids can't change them, but you won't be able to view the reports or monitor usage without your own iOS device.

First, check out [this helpful video tutorial](#) from Apple Support.



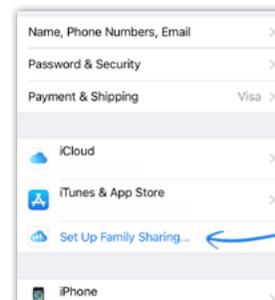
= Settings App

Once you have iOS 12 downloaded and installed on all devices in question, you will need to set-up the Screen Time app on your kid's phone. There are **two** ways you can do so, but you will need access to your either your kid's phone or their Apple ID and password.

The first way to do this is with their phone in hand. On their phone, tap **Settings**, then **Screen Time**. It will prompt you with a set-up screen, so choose **Continue**, and select **This is my child's phone** (see image).

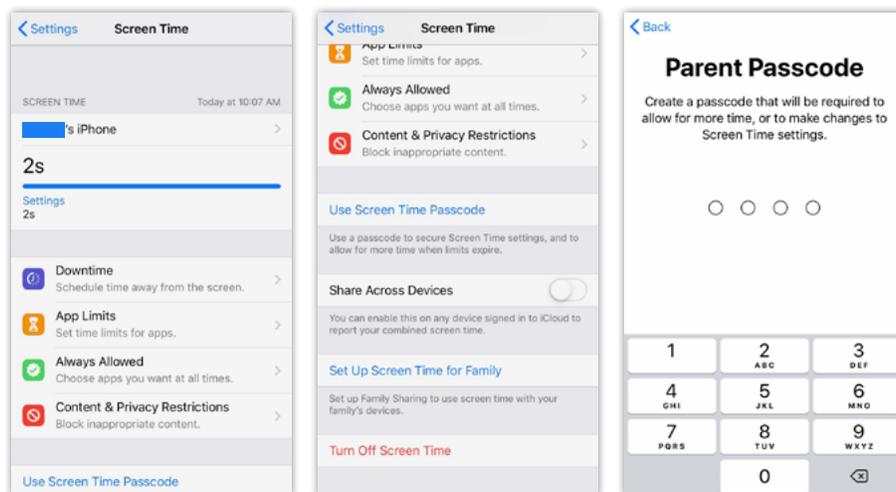
(If it does not prompt you with a set-up screen, scroll down and find “**Turn Off Screen Time**” in **red** ink. Select it, confirm, and return to **Settings**. Then, open Screen Time again, and it should give you a set-up screen.) If you are setting up a brand-new iOS device for your kid, go through the start-up process and create an Apple ID for them. Then tap **Continue** when prompted to set up Screen Time. After the set-up process, go to **Settings** and follow the instructions above.

The other way is through **Family Sharing**. Go to **Settings**, tap on **your name** (top), then **Set Up Family Sharing** on your iOS device and add your child as a family member with their Apple ID and password (see images).



Once they've joined your family, [they will show up](#) in Screen Time on your device. In Screen Time, tap on **your kid's account**, and **Turn Screen Time On**. **Note:** When setting up an Apple ID, you're required to enter a birthdate, so if you're adding children who are over 18 to your family, Screen Time knows this and will limit your ability to set limits on their device.

You can now choose all sorts of restrictions, starting with Downtime and App Limits (see below), which both enforce screen time awareness and control. Also, make sure to **create a passcode your child will not be able to guess**, one they cannot easily find out when you enter it for them.



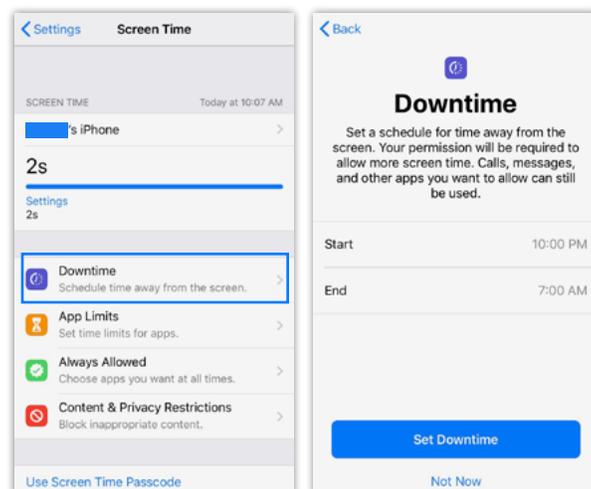
This passcode will lock all changes in the Screen Time app, and also will lock the phone from a “factory reset,” which would erase all restrictions you set. We should note that while the password will stop your kids from restoring the phone to its factory setting from the phone itself, it will not stop them from doing so by connecting the phone to iTunes on a laptop.

Beware that if you choose to ever turn off Screen Time, you will erase all your restrictions—although if you turn the restrictions back on and your kids used some of their screen time before you reset it, the phone will remember and count that time as used instead of starting their time over.

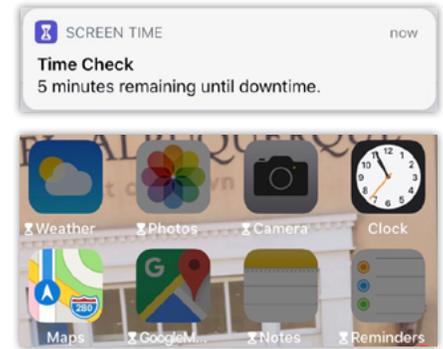
What's Downtime and how do I set it up?

The main purpose of Downtime is blocking out a certain time period during the day or night when your kids can't access certain or all apps on their devices. For example, you could set Downtime to begin at 10 PM and end at 7 AM. To do so, tap **Settings, Screen Time**, then **Downtime** and choose your desired time frame.

Unfortunately, you can only set Downtime for *one* block of time. So if you wanted to give your kids down time to work on homework in the afternoon and also prevent them from using their phones at night, you couldn't. You'd have to choose one or the other. Currently, [you also can't customize Downtime](#) to be different depending on the day of the week.

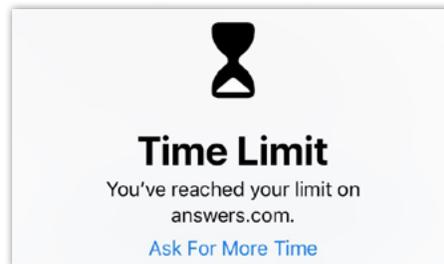


Once you've set it up, your kids will receive a notification (right) when they have five minutes left before Downtime starts.



Once it does, the software grays out all the apps except for the Phone, Messages, and Safari (or any that you have selected under **Always Allowed**, explained in a bit) and puts a tiny hourglass next to the apps' names (see image).

If your kids try to access websites on Safari during Downtime, they will see a screen that says they've reached their **time limit** and that they can't access them.



Can my kids get around Downtime?

During beta testing, it was discovered that one easy way for kids to get around Downtime was for them to go into Settings and change the phone's clock to a time outside of Downtime (or to a 24-hour time format). They'd then have free access to their apps. It seems that these bugs have been squashed in this official release, though we're sure more will be discovered in the upcoming months.

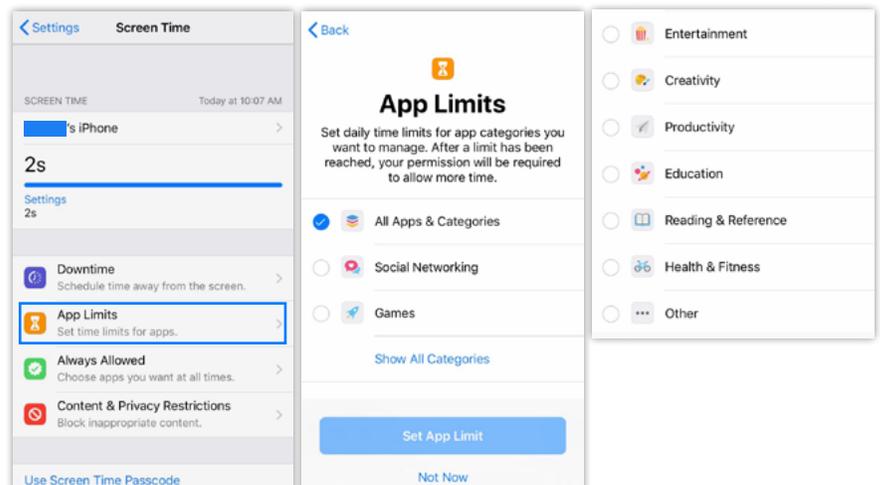
What are App Limits and how do I set them up?

App Limits is a feature in Screen Time that allows you to set time limits for certain apps or certain categories of apps on your kids' phones. You can also choose which apps you want to always allow, say, in case of an emergency. For example, the phone function cannot be disabled, along with any others you add to the list. If you want your kid to have limited time on Instagram, but to always be able to access their Kindle app, you can put that app here.

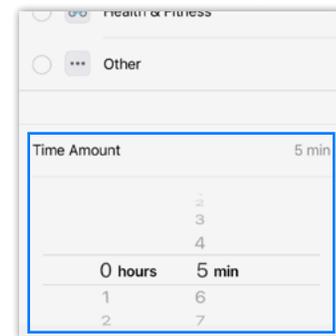
Setting App Limits

To set limits on the phone's apps, tap **Settings**, then **Screen Time**, then **App Limits** and tap on **Add Limit**. You can then set a time limit that applies to **All Apps & Categories** or you can tap on **Show All Categories** to select specific categories that you would like to restrict.

You might set time limits for **Social Networking**, **Entertainment**, or **Games**, for example.



Once you select your desired categories by tapping on them, the option to set the time limit will appear toward the bottom of the screen (see image).



After you select your time, the option to **Customize Days** will appear. Unlike Downtime, you can customize App Limits per day of the week so that you can give your kids more time on the weekend if you'd like.

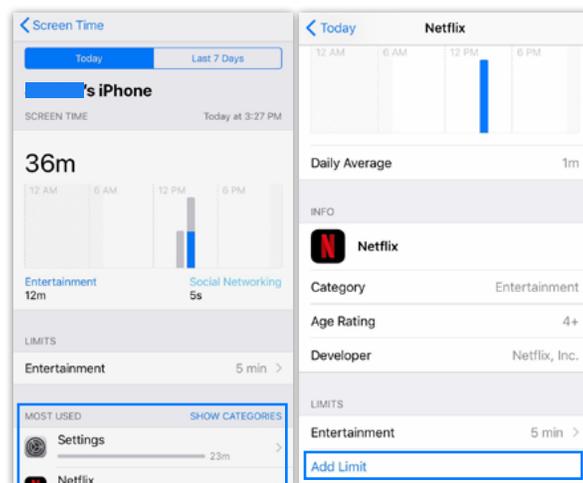
Your kids will get a notification when they have five minutes remaining to use a particular app. When their time is up on that app, if they try to use it, they will see the same time limit screen as with Downtime.

Once their time is up, the software will gray out the banned apps and put a small hourglass next to each one, the same way it does with Downtime.

One bug we noticed when trying out the update is that when we set limits on Social Networking, FaceTime was listed in that category, but we were still able to access FaceTime after our time was up.

One thing that is pretty frustrating about the App Limits feature is that while it's possible to set a time limit for **one particular app**, it's not obvious that you can do so and it's certainly not clear how you can. So if your kid is always on Fortnite and you're trying to figure out how to limit that specific game instead of every game on the phone, it's hard to know how to do so.

One of Screen Time's features, as we've mentioned, is showing users how much they're using their phones—that is, how often they're picking up their phones, how much time they're spending on each app, etc. [To customize limits for individual apps](#), you'll need to go back to **Screen Time** and tap on **the name of the device** at the top. This will take you to a breakdown of how the phone is being used (see images).



Scroll down a little till you see the **Most Used** apps. Tap on the app you want to customize (if it's showing Categories, tap on **Show Apps & Websites**). At the bottom of that screen, you'll see an option to **Add Limit** (see images). Tap on that, and you'll be able to set a customized time limit for that specific app.

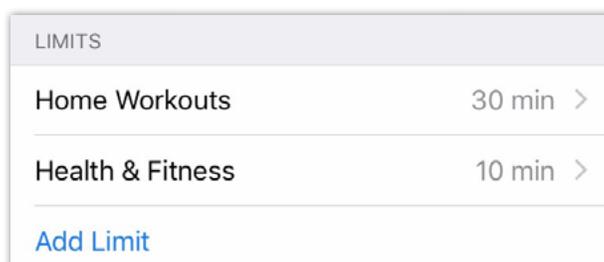
Things to keep in mind:

The time you set for a category applies collectively to **all** of the apps in that category. If your kids spend all their time on Netflix, they will have none left to play music on Spotify (or similar) because they're both categorized under **Entertainment**.

The time allotment goes by day and [resets at midnight](#). From our testing, it seems that **shorter time limits supersede longer ones** (see image).

For example, if you set a limit of 1 hour on Netflix but another limit of 30 minutes for Entertainment, then the 30 minutes will “win” and only 30 minutes of Netflix can be watched that day.

The time counts while the apps are open. If your kids

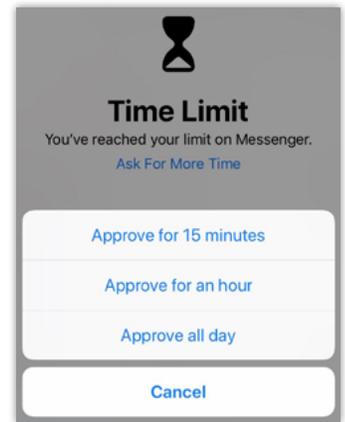


accidentally leave an app open and you've put a time limit on that app, they will still use up their time, even if they not using that app.

If your kids use up their screen time, they have the option to request more time (see image)

You can then decide to approve more time for **15 minutes, an hour, or all day**. Currently, there is no limit to how often your kids can continue requesting more time, *so your phone could be bombarded by requests all day and night* (another weakness).

If you decide to limit apps by categories, you might want to make sure you know which apps the software thinks goes in a particular category. For example, it puts the Dictionary app in "Reading & Reference," not "Education."



Can my kids get around App Limits?

Remember, there are *always* ways to get around parental controls. One way to get around App Limits is through a Chromecast, a device that lets you cast videos from your smaller devices to your TV. We were able to continue watching Netflix through Chromecast on the TV, even after our time was up on the phone. In fact, Netflix continued autoplaying episode after episode while Screen Time *prevented* us from turning it off because the Limit Reached screen disables all of the app's functions. We had to bypass the limit by entering the passcode in order to turn it off.

What is "Always Allowed"?

In **Screen Time** below Downtime and App Limits, you'll see **Always Allowed**, which lets you choose which apps (if any) to exempt from Downtime. If you've chosen the **All Apps and Categories** limit in App Limits, then this feature will be unavailable. The phone app can never be unallowed (but calls can be silenced during certain hours of the day using [Do Not Disturb](#)).



What do I need to know about "Content & Privacy Restrictions"?

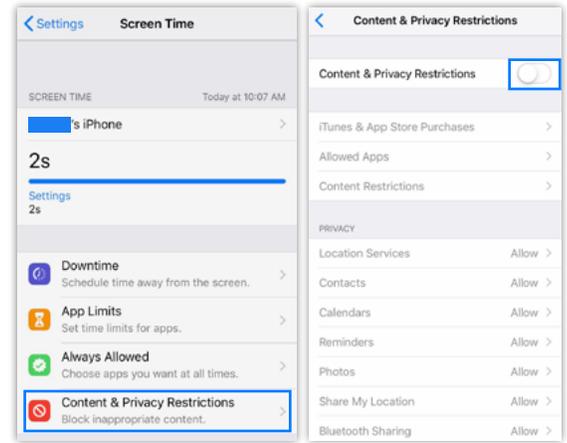
This the last major category in Screen Time, and there's a lot going on in it (see images on next page).

Remember that these restrictions are useful to a point, but will never be able to block all inappropriate content your kids could access. Also, some of the restrictions don't block the apps that you'd think they would.

First, toggle restrictions to “On” (there will be green behind the switch if it’s on). Now there will be 3 content categories and 11 privacy categories, along with 7 areas where you can lock your changes. We will take you through each.

iTunes and App Store Purchases

Here you can disallow installing apps, deleting apps, or simply purchasing apps. Also, note that you can require a password for purchases, allowing only authorized users to buy apps. This blocks friends and others who would not know the password from downloading anything.



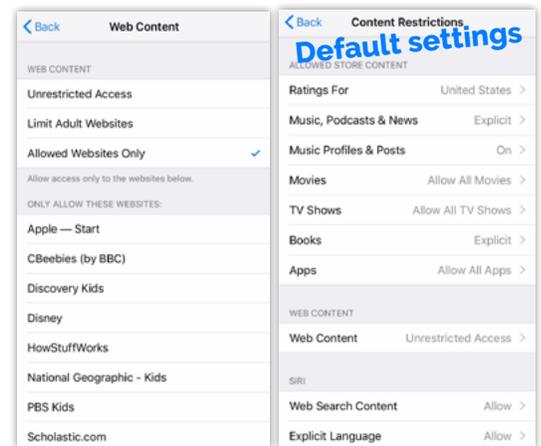
If you decide to block your kids from installing any new apps from the App Store, the App Store app will disappear. If you decide to allow it again after blocking this option, when the App Store reappears, it will mess up however you have your apps arranged on the phone and you’ll have to reorganize them.

Allowed Apps

Under this category you can toggle off any pre-installed apps, such as Safari or the iTunes Store. This means that if your kid is not yet ready for the responsibility of the internet or the app store (among other things) you can turn them off.

Content Restrictions

In this tab you can set rating limitations for everything: music, podcasts, news, movies, TV shows, books, apps, Siri, game center, and even web content and language. Note that under Web Content you have three options: **unrestricted access**, **limit adult content**, and **allowed websites only** (see image). This last option allows your kid to only access websites from a list you can customize.



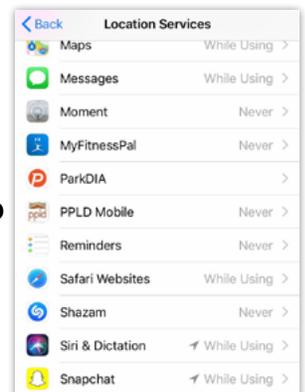
Note that the default settings are to allow explicit content, even though you’ve told Apple when you set up Screen Time that this was a child’s phone (see image, far right).

Also, choosing “Don’t Allow TV Shows” or “Don’t Allow Movies” only stops your kids from watching them in the TV app on the phone. It does nothing to prevent your kids from watching Netflix or videos on YouTube. Blocking explicit content on podcasts did block podcasts that were overtly explicit, but it’s certainly not going to catch everything inappropriate that your kids could find.

Privacy

Location Services, Share my Location

You can turn on Location Services so you can always access your kid’s location via your phone. You can also decide whether or not to allow Share my Location, which works through the messaging app. It’s not a bad idea to double check which apps are accessing your location (see image). We were surprised to see that Safari Websites were accessing our location whenever we used them. Additionally, you can lock these changes so they remain as you have chosen.



Contacts

Here you can control the apps that have asked to use your kid's contact list. Obviously this is an important area to be vigilant for sketchy messaging apps and the like. You can also lock the changes you make here (see image).



Calendars, Reminders, Photos, Bluetooth Sharing, Microphone, Speech Recognition, Media & Apple Music

These sections are less of a threat, but if you should ever need to control which apps use these tools, here is where you do so. There may be no apps wanting to use these tools, but it's a good idea to just check what's asking to, every once in a while. Again, you can lock your changes to these categories.

Advertising

Here you can choose whether to allow ads or not. This is particularly useful if your child plays app games that may have many ads throughout the play experience.

Allow Changes

Passcode Changes and Account Changes

In these sections, you can lock the passcode and account your child uses so that they cannot add or change any passwords or account information.

Cellular Data Changes

In this tab you can make it so cellular data cannot be turned off. Sometimes it is useful to be able to turn it off, so you can save data when using wifi. However, if you have a problem with your child turning it off and leaving it off, you can make it so it always stays on.

Volume Limit

All you can do here is either allow changes to the volume limit, or lock it. To change the volume limit, go to **Settings, Music**, and select **Volume Limit**. This will set the max volume that can be reached in headphones and on the main phone speaker.

Do Not Disturb While Driving

Similar to the volume limit, all you can do here is either allow Do Not Disturb While Driving or disallow it. To set-up Do Not Disturb While Driving, go to **Settings, Do Not Disturb**, and scroll down to the bottom section.

TV Provider and Background App Activities

These categories may not be the most helpful, but if you need to adjust the TV provider settings on your kid's phone (if you have one), or disallow apps to run in the background (some apps function this way), then here is where you go.

But my kids can get around *all* of this, right?

Unfortunately, if a teen wishes to get past the controls on their device, the Internet [too easily](#) provides detailed instructions on how to do so. Even if a teen does not personally know how to bypass security settings, most likely their friends can show them how. Some teens make it their business to keep up with new tech and online developments so they can sidestep limitations quickly and at will.

And, if they're desperate, many young people will simply reset their devices to factory settings to wipe out the limitations placed on it. Although this action clears everything on the device,

a user can save the device's information to a Mac computer via a USB cable or a cloud service. Then, after the reset, they simply reload whatever they want back onto the device—minus the parental controls.

[Other methods](#) readily allow savvy teens to hide their internet activity and browser history. These include installing VPN (virtual private network) software, “proxy sites” which divert the device's activity to a different server (similar to using a neighbor's wi-fi), installing a hidden browser on their device, and even using Google Translate as a crude proxy site. But, of course, even if we could prevent our kids from going through all this and have their phones set up with perfect boundaries and controls, they can always just log into their accounts (or create new ones) on a friend's phone later. Or, as a parent recently told us, friends can give their old phones to our kids, which they can then keep hidden from us, and we would be none the wiser.

What do I do if my teen keeps finding ways around parental controls?

If a teen is a repeat offender, we feel your frustration and pain! It can be so grinding to have a child who sees boundaries as simply another challenge to overcome. And while we admire their perseverance and creativity, this desire to subvert authority may point to a deeper issue.

True or false: *The stricter the parent, the sneakier the child.* What do you think? When we ask this of parents at our [live events](#), mothers typically respond that they think it's true, while fathers typically think it's false (there are exceptions, of course). Obviously every child is different, and just because you might be strict doesn't mean all your children will react to you the same way. We think it depends on our view of sin.

If we view sin as something to avoid at all costs, something that shows how terrible a person is and how they've failed, then we will parent our kids that way. If they're caught in sin, we will punish them, tell them how disappointed we are, and tell them we expected better behavior out of them. They may be filled with shame and regret, especially if they still desire to partake in that sin (e.g. just because someone gets caught drinking doesn't mean they didn't enjoy the activity and won't want to do it again). So rather than disappoint mom or dad again, they find ways to continue that behavior without mom or dad finding out. They become **sin-concealers**.

However, if we view sin as a symptom of an underlying issue rather than as the problem itself, we'll take a different approach when dealing with it. When a child is caught deliberately choosing to sin, rather than reacting out of anger and disappointment, we'll take the time to talk to them about *why* they chose that behavior or action, how it affected them, and how it impacted others (in addition to allowing them to experience the consequences of their actions through lost privileges and other punishments). Then we'll also help them see how choosing that sin is actually choosing to settle for less than God's best for their lives, even though it may *seem* on the surface to be satisfying. By having these conversations with them, we help them view sin for the life-stealing, negative thing it is, as well as help them desire what God desires for them. In so doing, they will learn to be **sin-confessors**, i.e. children of God who “hate what is evil,” no matter what enticing form it takes, and who “cling to what is good” ([Rom. 12:9](#)). So much of the journey toward spiritual maturity is dying to the old self and taking on our new creation in Christ.

When it comes to smartphones and the boundaries we put in place for our kids, we need to help them see them for what they are: **boundaries that protect them and keep bad things out.**

Too often we've spoken to teens who felt that their parents only put limits on their phone use because their parents hate fun, are cruel, or are scared of smartphones (or maybe all three). But we've also spoken to many parents who are desperate to help their teens find true, fulfilling community or to keep them from being bullied or to find lasting joy. So there's a disconnect. The only way to bridge the gap is to talk our kids about *why* we do what we do and to allow them to talk to us about how our imposed boundaries make them feel.

G.K. Chesterton [wrote](#), "The more I considered Christianity, the more I found that while it had established a rule and order, the chief aim of of that order was to give room for good things to run wild." Think of ways to help your rebellious teen see boundaries from that perspective. Instead of seeing limits as punishment, help them realize that boundaries are designed to keep them safe. You give them boundaries not because you don't trust them, but because you love them and want what's best for their lives. And never forget that, as powerful as smartphones are, they are no match for the power of our God as His spirit prompts, teaches, admonishes, and leads them in navigating this challenging technology.

Finally, we must remind our teens that while we parents are paying for the phones and they're living under our roofs, *they* don't own the devices; we do. So if they continue to abuse their phone privileges, then we will continue to revoke those privileges until they can regain trust and prove that they're trustworthy. As with any tool or technology we have access to, our use of smartphones is a privilege, not a right.

How can I make the most of out of iOS?

Keep the device reasonably updated. Take advantage of emerging technology and stay alert to the newest hazards by [installing regular updates](#) to the iOS on the teen's device. Most casual tech users feel tempted at some point to leave an older version on their device, thinking it might be more difficult than it's worth to update and learn the new one. Maintaining effective security measures on the device is the most compelling reason to keep it updated. Older versions will eventually lose access to tech support, won't download newer apps, and more easily fall prey to online threats and identity thieves.

iOS offers regular notifications of available updates. When these notices appear on the device, simply agree to install them as instructed in the notification. These can also be installed manually.

Learn how to navigate an iOS device. iOS uses a screen called "Control Center" to organize the device's common settings and features (see image). To access it, swipe up from the bottom of the screen, then simply tap the appropriate button or slider to adjust the setting. When finished, swipe the top of the Control Center downward to hide it.

iOS uses a common set of touch-motions in its general navigation to simplify user access. For example, pinching in and out on the screen will zoom (pinch fingers inward to zoom out, pinch outward to zoom in), while double tapping will reset the zoom back to default. It helps to become adept with basic touchscreen functionality (tapping, double-taps, long-press or tap-and-hold, swipe, pinch or spread). Check out [Apple's list of gestures](#) and helpful videos. An easy-to-understand cheat sheet for iOS can be found at [Dummies.com](#), the folks who bring us the popular "For Dummies" series of reference books. It provides tips, tricks, and ways to get support while interpreting the most common icons,



navigation, and screen operations.

Use strong passwords. Increase the effectiveness of a password by adding numbers, symbols, and mixed-case letters. Avoid easy-to-guess information or personal information (like birth dates or the word “password”), and update them every six months.

Use tracking and control apps if iOS doesn’t offer enough protection. Consider [OurPact](#), [Norton Family Premier](#), [FamilyTime](#), and others. Some apps even contain regularly updated algorithms to alert parents of signs of depression, online predators, bullying, sexting, school safety threats, pornography, and harmful online content. Internet browsers (like Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox) also offer their own filtering systems; research free browser filters with [this reference from Common Sense Media](#).

Observe the teen, and trust your instincts. It’s easy to get caught up in the accusations and generalizations made about teen media and device usage, but no one really knows a kid better than his/her parent. The level of digital privacy appropriate for a teen depends on his/her personality, behavior, emotional development, well-being, social activity, and their ever-changing desire for freedom. A teen who behaves in a socially balanced way, maintains an honest relationship with her family, and primarily uses tech as a tool may require less monitoring on his/her device than one who is naturally shy and tends to socially isolate. Similarly, a parent may need to limit the digital privacy of a child who struggles with authority figures, while another parent may allow a 13-year-old to take a smartphone with him on the bus when he travels to soccer tournaments but not to school.

Know all account names and passwords. Every teen must understand they cannot expect absolute privacy on their devices, and parents are always well within their rights to observe and monitor their children’s tech usage. Any indication that a child may hurt themselves or someone else warrants a complete review of their digital presence. Parents need complete access to the teen’s device and everything on it. Near the end of this Parent Guide, we’ll give ideas about how to partner with our kids to do this well, i.e., how to maximize the benefits and minimize the relational damage.

A Manhattan psychotherapist [shared this story](#) about kids and digital privacy:

A lot of kids who come into therapy will say their mom is always texting them and asking where they are. Interestingly, I’ll say, “How about your mom won’t hound you, or embarrass you in front of your friends, if you let her use a tracker.” They don’t skip a beat and immediately say okay, he says. Plus, he adds, if a kid is “dead against” the tracker, that could be a sign that something’s wrong.

Is it possible to completely protect a teen from risk or to prevent access to undesirable content via their iOS device?

Unfortunately, no. What’s possible and much more effective, though, is to teach teens respect for the technology, to disciple them into a healthy habits, and to take an active, teachable, listening attitude toward what’s important to them. After all, it may seem a teen cares more about the device than anything else, but remember the real value is in the connection facilitated by the device to their identity, their friends, their family, and their future—the stuff everyone *really* cares about.

As imperative as it is to keep our teens safe and healthy, we will needlessly damage our relationship with our kids by constantly monitoring tech use simply out of curiosity or asymptomatic worry (or control), especially when we use controls without the teen's knowledge or buy-in. Ultimately, this practice will encourage more sneaking around and undermine the development of important character traits like responsibility, trust, self-discipline, and honesty. Deceitful parenting places a child in severe physical and emotional jeopardy like nothing else, and as we said, we just can't depend on tech alone to keep our kids safe.

The best results come from managing a device's operating system in combination with vigilant observation and proven relational techniques. These include open discussion, complete disclosure, appreciation of all points-of-view, acknowledgment of good behavior, reasonable expectations, and regular check-ins as agreed. As you implement boundaries, ask God to give you discernment of what boundaries work best for each child, when to trust a child vs. when they're not being honest, and when to add or revoke more privileges. And yes, it's ok to pray that your child will get caught in their sin!

In this way, we change what seems like an overwhelming parental responsibility into an opportunity. We get the chance to "train up a child in the way they should go" ([Prov 22:6](#)), and our kids get the chance to "set an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity" ([1 Tim 4:12](#)). It's definitely a win-win.

The bottom line

No parental control algorithms, settings, or apps are a good substitute for you, the parent. You know your kid best and therefore can make the best decisions for them as to when to get a smartphone, how to implement controls and monitors, how to create an atmosphere of accountability, and how they can earn more freedom and responsibility (yes, despite what they think, you do know better than they do).

We've all heard the old adage, "Do as I say, not as I do," but research shows that our children are formed far more by what we actually do than what we say. Also, the effects of our teaching diminish when we ourselves don't practice what we preach. Your teens will be much more likely to understand and submit to boundaries and accountability if they first see you submitting to them as well; that's why modeling appropriate behavior with our smartphones is so critical. None of us is immune to temptation. We all need accountability and, at times, help resisting temptation, especially when it comes to devices like smartphones that are [designed to be addictive](#). We have a unique opportunity to set a precedent for our teens by being vulnerable, having regular accountability checks, and submitting ourselves to the same (or similar) boundaries to which we submit them.

Pair this with having tough-but-powerful conversations about why you make the decisions you make and how they feel about those decisions. **Inviting open, honest dialogue is the absolute best thing you can do for your kids.** The more they feel heard and understood, and the more you can help them see the heart behind your decisions, the more likely they are to (eventually) see the wisdom and submit to your authority.

But the opposite is also true: The more we simply enforce rules with no explanations, the more we restrict, the more we focus on good behavior rather than their hearts, the more likely our kids are to disobey, rebel, and do what they think is best—to their own harm and heartache, of course.

The best gift we can offer our kids is an open, honest relationship, one that's built on trust, responsibility, love, and the Gospel. Smartphones are simply part of that relationship—not the enemy—and we have an opportunity to disciple our kids into a biblical perspective of their phones and how they should fit into their lives.

Note: We highly recommend also reading our [“Parent’s Guide to Smartphones”](#) for tips on how to view smartphones, how to prepare a child for getting his/her first smartphone, and more.

Related Axis Resources

[Reclaiming the Smartphone: 4 Important Conversations](#) (free video series)

[A Parent’s Guide to Smartphones](#)

[A Parent’s Guide to Sexting](#)

[A Parent’s Guide to Instagram](#)

[A Parent’s Guide to Snapchat](#)

[A Parent’s Guide to Internet Filtering & Monitoring](#)

[A Parent’s Guide to Teen Privacy](#)

Additional resources

[Everything You Need to Know about Parental Controls](#), from Common Sense Media

[How to Set Up Parental Controls](#), Apple.com

[Parental Controls: The Ultimate Guide](#), IMore.com

[Apple Support’s YouTube Channel](#) (video tutorials)

[“iOS 12: Do Not Disturb and Notifications Get Major Overhauls,”](#) CNet.com

We’re creating more content every day! If you found this guide helpful and valuable, check out axis.org/guides each month for new Guides covering all-new topics and for other resources.